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EA-02-17
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E-99-376
Hobart Butte

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE

DECISION RECORD and FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Hobart Butte Timber Sale
Environmental Assessment No. OR090-EA-02-17
Sale Tract No. E-99-376

BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Land Management prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) which analyzed the effects of this Proposed Action and alternatives. The EA and a preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were made available for public comment in September, 2002. One public comment was received.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the information contained in the EA (OR090-EA-02-17), and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) the implementation of the Proposed Action or alternatives will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the "Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl," (April 1994) and the "Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan," (June 1995); (2) the Proposed Action and alternatives are in conformance with the Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan; and (3) the Proposed Action and alternatives do not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

DECISION

It is the decision of the Bureau of Land Management to select Alternative A described in the Hobart Butte Timber Sale EA. This EA and the FONSI analyzed the selected alternative and found no significant impacts.

Implementation of this decision will result in forest management activities including: density management of both Matrix and Riparian Reserve by commercial timber harvest; road construction, renovation, and decommissioning within the Matrix; and large woody debris creation in the Riparian

Reserves. All design features identified in the EA (pp. 5-6) will be implemented.

The selected alternative is in conformance with the "Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl," (NSO ROD, April 1994), and the "Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan," (RMP, June 1995), as amended by the "Record of Decision for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines," (January 2001).

ALTERNATIVES

In addition to the selected alternative, the EA considered four other alternatives in detail (EA, pp. 3-6). The Proposed Action would be similar to Alternative A except that there would be no scotchbroom buffer. Alternative B would be similar to Alternative A except there would be no scotchbroom buffer nor harvest within Riparian Reserves. Alternative C would be similar to Alternative A except there would be no scotchbroom buffer nor road construction. Alternative D is the "no action" alternative and would involve no management activities.

RATIONALE FOR SELECTION

The purpose of the action in the Matrix is to provide a sustainable flow of forest products and improve stand vigor to accelerate diameter growth. The Proposed Action and Alternatives A, B, and C would meet this purpose of the action. The purpose of the action in the Riparian Reserves is to reduce stand density to accelerate diameter growth and to enhance the physical characteristics and biological processes within two fish-bearing streams. Only the Proposed Action and Alternatives A and C would meet this purpose.

Alternative A would most effectively meet the purposes of the action. It would provide forest products by density management. It would improve stand vigor through acceleration of diameter growth of retention trees in both the Matrix and Riparian Reserves, hastening canopy layering and increased crown ratios. It would enhance the physical and biological processes within two fish-bearing streams through large woody debris creation.

Based on the analysis discussed and presented in the EA, Alternative A is consistent with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy and the objectives for the Riparian Reserves, and would not prevent or retard attainment of any of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives (EA, p. 13). Silvicultural practices in the Riparian Reserves will help acquire desired vegetation characteristics needed to attain ACS objectives (EA, p. 13).

The Proposed Action and Alternatives A, B and C would degrade habitat for spotted owls on a local, short-term basis; ultimately, late-successional habitat would be enhanced (EA, p. 16). The Proposed Action would provide approximately the same amount of timber as Alternative A and would have the same effects on spotted owl habitat. Alternatives B and C would provide less timber and would have lesser short-term effects on spotted owl habitat because fewer acres would be harvested (EA, p. 16). However, fewer acres would benefit by achieving late-successional forest structure characteristics more quickly through density management (EA, p. 16).

Of all the action alternatives, Alternative C would least affect the spread of scotchbroom because it

would not change light levels in the standing timber near the infested area under the Bonneville Power Administration powerline (EA, p. 17). However, of all the action alternatives, Alternative C least effectively meets the purpose of the action in the Matrix. The Proposed Action and Alternative B would most affect the spread of scotchbroom because both would increase light levels in the treated area near the site of infestation (EA, pp. 16-17). Alternative A would minimize the potential spread of scotchbroom because of the 50-foot no harvest buffer while still effectively meeting the purpose of the action (EA, p. 17).

Alternative D (no action) would not meet the purpose of the action within the Matrix or Riparian Reserves. Alternative D would provide no timber, nor would it reduce stand density. Alternative D would result in slower development of late-successional forest structural characteristics than the Proposed Action and Alternatives A, B and C (EA, p 16). Alternative D would have no immediate effects on wildlife habitat and would have no effect on the spread of scotchbroom (EA, p. 17).

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A public notice advertising the availability of the EA and FONSI appeared in the Eugene Register-Guard on September 4, 2002. Additionally, the EA and FONSI were mailed to interested individuals and organizations (EA, p. 19). A 30-day public comment period closed on October 4, 2002. One comment letter was received and is addressed in the EA.

Pursuant to the Endangered Species Act, consultation was completed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which found that the action " ...[is] not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the spotted owl."

Consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service is not required for this Proposed Action or the Alternatives.

The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz and the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde were notified of this project during the scoping process, requesting information regarding tribal issues or concerns relative to the project. No response was received.

IMPLEMENTATION

This decision will be implemented by a timber sale contract and a service contract. A timber sale contract will implement the road construction, renovation, timber harvest, and decommissioning of roads used for timber harvest operations described in Alternative A (EA, pp.5-6). A service contract will implement the felling of trees into the streams for fish habitat enhancement (EA p. 4).

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

The decision to implement the timber sale portion of this project may be protested under 43 CFR 5003 - Administrative Remedies. In accordance with 43 CFR 5003.2, the decision for the timber sale portion of this project will not be subject to protest until the notice of sale is first published in the Eugene Register-Guard on March 5, 2003. This published notice of sale will constitute the decision document for the purpose of protests of the timber sale portion of this project. 43 CFR 5003.2(b) Protests of the timber sale portion of this decision must be filed with this office within

fifteen (15) days after first publication of the notice of sale.

The decision to implement the service contract/non-timber sale portion of this project may be appealed to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4. If an appeal is taken, the notice of appeal must be filed in this office within thirty (30) days of the first publication of the notice of this decision in the Eugene Register-Guard on March 5, 2003, for transmittal to the Board. A copy of the notice of appeal and any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs, must also be served upon the Regional Solicitor, Pacific Northwest Region, U.S. Department of the Interior, 500 NE Multnomah Street, Suite 607, Portland, Oregon 97323, within the same time frame. In taking an appeal, there must be strict compliance with the regulations. In accordance with 43 CFR 4.21, an appellant has the right to petition the Office of Hearing and Appeals to stay the implementation of the decision; however, an appellant must show standing and present reasons for requesting a stay of the decision. The petition for stay must be filed together with a timely notice of appeal. (43 CFR 4.21(a)(2)).

/s/ Emily Rice
Field Manager

March 3, 2003
Date